The Diamond Sutra

[Three sounds of the bell]

Dear Sangha,

Today is the 14th of December 1997. We are in the winter retreat of Plum Village. We are in the Upper Hamlet. Today we conclude talking about the Diamond Sutra before we go to another sutra. The Diamond Sutra is considered to be the basic sutra for the practice of dhyana, dhyana means the core teaching of the Buddha. Every dhyana school uses the Diamond Sutra. There is some sentences in the Diamond Sutra which look a little mysterious, such as; "We try to save countless living beings, but in fact there is no living being who is saved", and "The dharma is not the dharma, that is why that it is the right dharma", and "Wherever there is form, there is deception." Sometimes the language of Zen masters looks mysterious like that. And sometimes there are sentences like "What is the sound of the one hand clapping?" and, "What was your true face before your grandma was born?" or, "Everything goes to the one so where does the one go to". These koans look mysterious, but when you look deeply you can understand all these mysterious things.

The method that we use in order to understand the Diamond Sutra is the method of Vijnanavada, Buddhist psychology. If we can understand the Diamond Sutra, it is because we have looked at the Diamond Sutra under the lens of Buddhist psychology and the lens of the Avatamsaka Sutra. The basic teaching of the Avatamsaka Sutra is interpenetration, interconnection, interbeing. According to Buddhist psychology there are three natures that we have to remember: The first is discrimination, A is different from B, and different from C. But then the second of the three natures of Buddhist psychology is interpenetration, interconnection. And then, by seeing that, we discover the third nature, that's the true nature, and reality as it is will be revealed totally. Buddhist psychology helps us to see that in each of us there are many kinds of seeds, many varieties of seeds: there are positive seeds, there are neutral seeds, and there are negative seeds. And when the negative seeds are watered every day, you become a very negative person. If the positive elements are watered in you, you become a very joyful, helpful, wonderful person. So when you see a person, you see all the elements that make that person. There are many elements of their ancestors, and many elements of their environment.

You can use the Buddhist psychology in order to discover the Diamond Sutra. The second way to discover the Diamond Sutra is the Avatamsaka Sutra. The Avatamsaka Sutra is the sutra that helps us to see that one element is made of all other elements, and that the all is made of the one. When you look at A, you see B, C, D, E, F, G, H…. When you see B, C, D, E, F, G, H in A, you see everything in A, you see A is not A, that is why A is really A. So we look at the Diamond Sutra through the lens of Buddhist psychology and the lens of the Avatamsaka Sutra. The characteristic of the Avatamsaka Sutra is interpenetration, interbeing, interdependence.

Every week, we‘ll read the Diamond Sutra, but if you cannot catch the essence, the basic teaching, it is a loss. You have to really catch the basic teaching so that the wisdom, the insight, will grow every day in you. First of all, the Buddha has taught us that the bodhisattva is a person who has bodhicitta, who has the spirit of love. You have to learn to look at the world with non-discriminating eyes, non-discriminating view. First point: You look deeply at the world with non-discriminating eyes. (Thay in English:) An authentic bodhisattva should be able to look at and to view things with his or her non-discriminative mind.

The first point is non-discriminative mind. If you remember the teaching I often explain to you, look at your right hand, your right hand has a non-discriminating mind. The right hand never discriminates against the left hand, never discriminates the legs, the feet or any part of our body. So remember the image of the right hand next time you look at the sunshine, the squirrel, the snake, your lovely brother in the dharma, sister in dharma, your difficult brother or sister in the dharma. You look with the eyes of no discrimination, you are her, you are him, and she is you, he is you. You deal with everyone and everything with this non-discriminative mind.

The second point: If you want to learn the non-discriminative view, you must not be bound to any sign, any mark, any form. That is a kind of aide-memoire for you. What is a sign? It is the object of your perception. You perceive something and you have that sign in your mind, you are bound to that sign. Wherever there is a sign, a mark, an appearance, there is deception. So when we look at Sister Thuan Nghiem you see that she has an appearance at first, you see a self. But if you look deeply into the appearance of sister Thuan Nghiem, you see elements of her which are not her, so we are not caught. (Thay in English:) The second point is that in order to get the wisdom of non-discrimination you have to train yourself so that you are not caught by the appearance, by the object of your perception.

Third: If you don‘t want to be caught by sign, by form, you have to look deeply into the sign. It doesn‘t mean that you abandon the sign. You use the sign, but you look deeply, in order not to be caught by the sign.

(Thay in English:) The second point is that in order to get the wisdom of non-discrimination, you have to train yourself so you are not caught by the object of your perception. The third point is that in order not to get caught in the object of your perception, you have to look deeply in to that object of perception, into the nature of that object.

It means that you cannot throw away the sign, the object of your perception. If you don‘t want to be caught by the sign, by the object of your perception, you have to look deeply. So you should not abandon the sign - but you have to look deeply. There are some forms, some traditional forms, and may we think we practice the Diamond Sutra, we don‘t need all these forms… that is not the way. You have to look deeply into the nature of these traditional rituals and forms. In the beginning it seems silly, it seems not worth it, but you look deeper and you see something, but you are not caught, not attached.

So you look deeply into A, and you see that A is made of B, C, D, E, F, G, H….etc. You will not throw away A. The Buddha said to be caught by sign is bad, but it‘s worse if you are caught by non-sign. Therefore, if you want to look deeply, you have to see the characteristics of interdependence, interbeing, interpenetration of each thing. The characteristic of interpenetration, interbeing, is the true nature of things, it is not invented by the Buddha, it‘s discovered by him and you can discover it by yourself.

(Thay in English:) "The fourth point is that when you know how to look deeply, you begin to see the nature of paratantra, the nature of interconnection of the object of your perception."

In order to see nature, like a flower is made of non-flower elements, you see the characteristics of paratantra, paratantra is the Sanskrit word for interdependence. When you look at the flower, you see all the elements which are not the flower, like the sun, the cloud, the farmer, time, space, the love of the farmer, etc. And then you see that in order to look deeper, you have to see the interconnection, the interdependence, the interpenetration of the nature of things as they are. The more you see the true nature of paratantra, which means interpenetration, the more your ignorance, the more your discrimination will disappear. Your discrimination between the right hand and the left hand, the right arm and the left arm, the right arm and the legs will disappear. (Thay in English:) "When you begin to discover the nature of interconnection, of interbeing, of the object of your perception, its nature of discrimination begins to withdraw, to fade away, and it‘s nature of perfection will start to appear. So the true nature of the ‘reality as it is’ will slowly appear."

Fifth: When the reality as it is, the character of perfection, appears, you have deep insight of the true nature of things as they are. The word 'kien tanh' is a very important word in Zen, in the teaching of the Buddha. The Japanese call it 'kensho'. The word 'kien

tanh' goes together with two other words 'minh tam', clear mind. Kien tanh means simply to see deeply the nature of the object of your perception. You see deeply the true nature of the object of your perception. The object of your perception could be a flower, could be pebble, or a sister in the dharma, a brother in the dharma… or your enemies. So the objects of your perception have signs and so you are tricked, you are deceived by them. But when you look deeper, then you discover the true nature of that person. And you see the characteristic of non-discrimination, the characteristic of paratantra, interconnection, interdependence, interbeing, the nature of no-birth no-death. You see the characteristic of perfection, reality as it is, and suchness. Suchness means things as they are, it is true reality in itself. Very few people understand the word kien tanh, the word tanh means the true nature of phenomena, the true nature of what is there.

You see that when your mind is full of illusion, then the object of your mind is also illusion. If your mind is caught by a wrong perception, then your way to see the world is very wrong, you see only the signs and you are caught by the signs. Every day we live in a very superficial way and so we only see things in a very illusory perception. You see each person as a very illusory reality of that person. You see every event as an illusory reality of that event. And because we live in a superficial way, the Buddha proposed that we live our lives deeper, look deeper and we touch the deeper image of that person, of that thing. Then thanks to a number of instruments I have mentioned already, you use paratantra, the characteristic of interdependence, and you can go through the curtain of illusory discrimination and reach the reality as it is, the characteristic of perfection of reality as it is, without being distorted. The more you look deeply, thanks to paratantra, thanks to the character of interpenetration, interdependence, the more you go deep into the character of interpenetration, interbeing. Then you arrive to the true perfection of the nature of the object of your mind, you arrive to the reality as it is, not the distorted reality that we are used to seeing. The Buddha said that 99% of our perceptions are wrong, illusory. So when your mind is superficial, you see things in a very illusory way. But more you look deeper, using the instrument of interbeing, interpenetration, then you arrive to the true nature, the true suchness of the reality as it is. So it's true landscape, true reality and true mind, and your mind will become true mind. So your true mind will touch the true reality. Now you have a deluded mind, a mind obsessed by a lot of deluded perceptions, and the signs present to you are very deluded. But with the same signs, you observe it deeply with the nature of paratantra, the nature of interconnection, and you'll get through the discriminative perception and see the suchness, the reality as it is. You attain kensho, 'kien tanh', and your mind is true mind.

Some teachers, especially in Vietnam, think that we have to die in order to reach the true nature of reality. That is completely wrong according to what the Buddha said. It's the same landscape, the same reality. You don't have to die. If your mind is more and more deep, your mind is more and more true, more and more you go into the depth of yourself, then the reality will reveal as it is, in its own depth. So true mind touches true reality, while the deluded mind will only be in touch with deluded images, deluded objects of your mind. So don't be too sure. You look at a person and you see many thousand years of their ancestors, you see many years, many decades, of their environment. When you see like that you are not shocked, you know that things are just like that, so then you cannot be angry. This is, because that is, this is not, because that is not, and when you see like that, you cannot be angry with anyone. The more you discover, the more you see the true reality, so when you can discover the use of the instrument of interpenetration and interdependence, then you can see the reality. You can see 10% of reality, 20% of reality, 60 % of reality, 80% of reality… It depends on your practice.

In many Zen centers people speak of 'kensho – kien tanh' in a very mysterious way, as though it is something you can never reach, but it's very simple. When we look at a person, we are attracted by that person, or we are repulsed by that person, we have no sympathy for that person, but don't be caught. The more you use the instrument of paratantra, the more you see the true nature of that person, and then you can see everything and can accept her or him. So your mind is a deluded mind, don't be so sure that your mind is true mind yet. Your deluded mind looks at the deluded reality, then you use the paratantra, the tool of interdependence, interconnection. The more you look, the more you see clearly, and true reality reveals itself to you 10%, 20%. (Thay in English:) "When our mind has become the true mind, enlightened mind, the nature of the object of our perception will reveal itself as suchness."

[Bell]

In one Buddhist chant there is a sentence; "I would like to have a true mind, a lucid mind, in order to touch the reality as it is and to stop the circle of samsara." That is the meaning of the chanting you often read in Vietnamese. So to break through the veil of signs, as a practitioner, you should not say that to see the reality as suchness is the work of 20 years of practice, no. You have to see the reality as suchness as you eat, as you drink, it is your daily practice. 'Minh tam kien tanh' here is obtained by our practice of looking deeply. It means to look deeply with paratantra and to see the nature of interconnection. You have to see the piece of bread as the reality as it is, your brother in the dharma as the reality as it is, your sister your, partner, your children, your colleagues at work as the reality as it is. That is not the result of ten years or twenty years of practice in a practice center. You can do it at home, at your work.

The sixth is that when you reach the reality as it is, you reach the point that we call no craving, no anger, no fear. If we have a lot of craving we do not have deep insight. If we have a lot of anger we do not have true mind. If we have a lot of fear, we do not have that true mind, true insight. Craving means craving for something, we usually run after the object of our craving, but that craving may be a sign. We crave for that because we do not see the true nature of the object of our craving. Let's say money, let's say sex, let's say fame, let's say good food, wealth, if we run after these cravings, it is because we do not see the reality of the object of our mind as it is. So you have to look deeply into money, you look deeply into sex, you look deeply into fame. You do not throw them away, you look deeper and you see how things like that have brought you a lot of suffering, a lot of difficulties. The Buddha used to say that craving is like holding a torch against the wind, the fire will burn you. Craving is like bones without flesh. The dog chews the bone without flesh and never feels satisfied. Like somebody who is thirsty and drinks only salty water, the more he drinks, the more he is thirsty. We keep running after money and we think that just that amount of money will make us happy. When you have that amount of money it's always not enough, because people always want to have more. And then you run after more and more and more and more money. There are people who have a lot of money, but they are not happy at all. In the supermarket you can buy bones without flesh for dogs, the Buddha said that the object of your craving is like these bones without flesh. The dog bites it all the time, and never feels satisfied. The more you have, the more you want, and the more you are thirsty, craving is death. The Buddha also illustrated it like this: there is one little bird which catches some food, and the big birds want to eat the little birds. So the little birds have to release the food, so that the big birds will eat the food and not kill the little bird. If the little bird is craving for the food, it will die immediately.

The Buddha illustrated this by ten cases of craving that lead us to sufferings, difficulties, and accidents. In Plum Village I use other illustrations. I say that when people went fishing in the past they used a real little fish or real insects in order to hook the fish. But nowadays they use plastic bait, they put it on the hook and the fish think that it is real food for them and they are hooked. So the sign is delusion and you have to look deeper to see that it is not worth to run after it. You can go deep into the nature of no craving for that sign, and then you see that money is not something that we need to crave for. We need some, for basic use, but not so much, and if we have enough, why do we have to run and run, and cause a lot of misery to each other. 'Kien' is to see deeply, tanh' is the true nature of things. So when you practice kien tanh, you see deeply the true nature of the object of your craving and you will be healed, you arrive at non-craving, 'alobha'. Then you do not run after the object of your craving and you feel so free, so happy. Kensho also gives us no-anger.

Try to look deeply into the person who you think is the object of you anger. The one who causes a lot of difficulties to you and your beloved ones, who causes a lot of injustice to you. If you look deeply into the object of that anger, you see with the look of paratantra that that person is made of so many elements. You see all his past, his present, his childhood, he is not very lucky, he does not have a teacher around, a good friend around. He is unhappy, he suffers, and so he causes a lot of suffering around him. So when you understand like that, instead of feeling hatred, you accept him, you have compassion for him. If you cannot have enough compassion, if you cannot accept that person it is because you don't know all the conditions that have made him, or her. So when you see a delinquent, a person who is alcoholic, a drug user, and sometimes they have to steal some of our

money. You are very angry and you want to punish them and put them in jail. But when you understand deeply, you see that if you found yourself in his situation with all your unwholesome seeds watered by friends, you see that you'd behave exactly like him. When you see all these things, you can only feel compassion, you do not want to punish him anymore, you only want to do your best to help him to get out of that situation. Then you are a person who has no anger, you'll be a free and happy person. And if you have no anger, it is because you have deep insight of the reality as it is, his reality as it is, her reality as it is.

Kien tanh leads us to the state of no fear, 'abhaya'. Abhaya is fear, we always have a lot of fear, fear to be left alone, fear to die, fear to be lonely, to have no money, to be homeless. We have that fear because we do not look deeply into the object of our perception, for example the fear of death, we all fear death. Imagine that one day we will be a corpse that cannot move, cannot speak, cannot do anything, and everyone will get around us and weep. Everybody is afraid of that, but there are people who see deeply into the true nature of death, and they have no more fear of death. Because they can see the true nature of death, they have no fear. I don‘t know if you have visited the lotus pond in New Hamlet last year, the lotus pond in New Hamlet teaches you a lot. Those of you who have been in New Hamlet last summer have seen that there were a lot of lotuses in the pond, beautiful lotuses. There are people who say that the first time they see a lotus they don‘t feel that it is a true flower, because it‘s so beautiful. During summer there are hundreds of people that sit around the lotus pond and admire the lotuses. But now, in winter, if you visit the lotus pond you cannot believe it. It‘s so ugly, so called ugly, you don‘t see lotus flowers at all, only rotten leaves, rotten stem, rotten receptacle… nothing.

There is a Vietnamese poet, Tan Da, who said that because of the rotten leaves of the lotus we are crying for the death of the flower. In the past the flower was so beautiful, and now the flower is dying and we are crying, that poet is caught by birth and death, by a sign. That's the wrong perception, the wrong image of the lotus pond. Last week I saw the lotus pond and I did not feel any tears in my eyes, I did not feel sad at all. I did not cry, because I saw that the rotten leaves are preparing diligently for the wonderful spring. This is because I‘ve overcome the sign, I can look deeply into the rotten leaves of lotus and I see that it is preparing. You look on the surface of the lotus pond, imagine a lotus leaf, fresh, green in summer. These fresh, green leaves are very beautiful. When you put a few drops of water on it, the drops of water will become like diamonds. But now these green leaves are rotten and the lotus leaves are dead. But if you see the fresh lotus leaf is so fresh and so green, that is because there is the rotten leaf before. So, the rotten leaf is preparing diligently for new fresh green leaves that will appear in a few months. It‘s preparing not only green leaves, fresh leaves, but can also give a very good root. The lotus root is very delicious to eat, the sisters used to cook them for me. So these rotten leaves are working hard, diligently, joyfully to prepare for fresh leaves to be born, for delicious food, and for beautiful lotuses, very soon, in summer. And so these rotten leaves are working and enjoying transforming in order to make the root wonderful, the leaves wonderful, the flower wonderful. And you only see the rotten leaves and you cry, you are craving. So the rotten leaf is investing a lot for the lotus root, for the fresh green leaves, for the wonderful flower. When you come and you ask the rotten lotus leaf: "Where are you now, I am crying." The lotus leaf may smile at you and say: "No, I‘m not dying, I‘m preparing to be more wonderful in my continuation."

When you walk here in walking meditation, you see a lot of rotten leaves on your path and you say: "Oh, how sad, how sad that these leaves are dying." You don‘t see that the whole spring, the whole summer these leaves continue to circulate in the tree, circulate in the branches, circulate everywhere. The leaves have absorbed sunshine, absorbed gas, and absorbed root sap in order to prepare themselves and expand everywhere. When the rotten leaf left the tree it‘s just a little part of herself, the greater part of herself is everywhere in the branches, in the trunk, in very silent preparation. During six or seven months that leaf has worked very hard and expanded herself everywhere, she is in the branches, the many layers of the trunk that are growing, and the many layers of the branches that are growing. So that leaf is this bigger branch than last year, this leaf is this bigger trunk than last year. You can see that this leaf is there in many forms. So you look at the tree, you see the leaf, you look at the sign of the tree, you see the leaf, you look at the sign of the leaf, you see the tree.

One day you will see me as a corpse, very rigid, hard, in the bed and you'll cry a lot, then you are caught by a sign. You have to see me everywhere in you, in many lay people, in many monks and nuns, in many of my readers, everywhere people can be in touch with me. I am there in their heart, I am there in their mind, I am there in their behavior. And you can see me everywhere. Don't cry because of that corpse that has become immobile. That corpse will be rotten. You will see that I am in the behavior of some of my readers, who, after reading my books feel motivated to do a lot of beautiful work. You will see me in yourself, in how much transformation you have in your own being. When you have met me, you see me in many friends of yours, in many brothers and sisters, everywhere. So, don't be tricked by my sign. The sign that you thought to be me. The Buddha said that every time you see a sign, that is a delusion.

The rotten lotus leaf needs only the heat of May and you will see beautiful leaves, beautiful lotuses. So when you see my corpse, rotten, you cry… No, this is a very deluded way to behave. You will see that when the conditions are sufficient, I will manifest in yourself, I will manifest in the people around you, in those who have been in touch with me. If you are afraid that I die, why don't you make myself grow in you. If you are afraid that I die, why don't you try to make me big in you, born in you, grown in you, grown up in you? Then you will behave like me, better than me. So you are not caught by the sign, and you see the nature of no birth, no death of the reality and you are not afraid of anything, no fear. Next Thursday you will look at the rotten lotus leaves in the lotus pond and you will ask the rotten lotus leaves: "Hello, where are you, where are you now? Where do you come from and where do you go?" And you will see the joyful preparation and journey of the rotten leaf, and then you will transcend every fear.

In this world there are a lot of people dying and there are those who work for dying people in order to help the person who is dying, to die peacefully, joyfully. These people have to learn this way of looking deeply. When you look at things deeply like that, then you have no fear in you. And when you have no fear in you, then you can sit stabily, without fear in yourself. Because you must be fearless of death in order to help people not to be fearful of death. If you are so afraid of dying, how can you help dying people? So you have to learn that this body is not you. You are not caught by this body, this body is one little part of yourself. When you feel like that, you live like that, you are not afraid of dying at all. Then you can take the hand of somebody who is dying, and you tell her or him that this body cannot touch you. You are much larger than this body. You take the hand of the dying person and you say: "You are much larger than this body. You are life without boundaries. You are your daughter, your son, your grandson, the descendants of your descendants. You are your students, you are your readers, you are your friends, those who are in touch with you, inspired by you, who love you, so you are not caught by this body. You are much more than this body." If you speak like this to that dying person, that dying person can die peacefully, without fear, because you yourself are without fear.

[Bell]

Seventh: Three qualities: no craving, no anger, no fear. This "no anger, no fear, no craving" will help the bodhisattva to practice generosity, to practice the mindfulness trainings, the precepts, to practice concentration, in a very natural way. These three qualities will help the bodhisattva to practice the precepts, to practice sharing, to practice inclusiveness, to practice diligence, to practice concentration in a very natural way, without any effort, without discrimination. When he is breathing, when he is eating, when he is drinking, he does so without any effort. When we have these three characters, these three qualities "no craving, no anger, no fear", then we know that we have a non-discriminating mind. Then we can realize the sharing, the practice of the precepts, the practice of inclusiveness, the practice of diligence, the practice of concentration in a very natural way, without any effort, without any discrimination, exactly like we are breathing every day. So, doing like that, you are a bodhisattva, because if a bodhisattva is very aware that he is a bodhisattva, he is not a real bodhisattva. So you do it naturally, like you breathe, like you smile, like you walk.

In the practice of many Zen centers, they have the tendency to think that 'kien tanh' is the true ability to understand ourselves. That is correct too, but only partially. We should not be caught by the word saying that kien tanh is to see the true nature of the object of your mind. The object of your mind could be the moon, the flower, the trees, but the object of your mind could be your own being. So you understand the true nature of the lotus leaf, you can see the true nature of your own being. Because you see

you, you see your ancestors, you see your parents, you see your sister, you see yourself as your sister, you see yourself as your parents, you see yourself as your sister, your brother, you see yourself as your colleague, you see yourself as all human beings, you see yourself as all living beings, you see yourself in the plants, trees and everything. So in many Buddhist Zen centers they think that kien tanh means only to see your true mind. That is correct, but it is not sufficient. You understand your body which means you understand your mind. You understand your body and your mind. You see the object of your mind too. You look deep into your body, you see that your body makes your mind and your mind makes your body. So there is no separation between body and mind. Body is mind and mind is body.

Many of today's scientists also want to learn how to transcend the sign. They also start to see that the non-discriminating mind can help people to go far. Many physicists have seen that elementary particles are like a kind of energy. Sometimes the energy can be illustrated as an electron, the small particles of an electron sometimes look like a particle. Electrons sometimes appear as particles, sometimes appear as waves. Sometimes the electron does not appear as particle, but it appears as wave, it's strange. The same electron sometimes appears as wave, sometimes appears as particle. In one experience it appears as wave, in another experience it appears as particle. So they cannot accept the argument that if it is a particle it must be only a particle, and not a wave. And the truth is like that. So sometimes they act as particles, sometimes they act as waves. So finally they have to accept that both are one. So particle is not a true sign of an electron and wave is not a true sign of an electron, so they call it a wavicle, that's a new name.

In Buddhism we have that too, 2600 years ago the Buddha also said: body and mind, he used the word namarupa. They do not distinguish body as different from mind. Nama is our mind and rupa is our form, our body. So the Buddha called our body and mind namarupa. Sometimes you appear as nama, sometimes you appear as rupa. We are both, so the Buddha said namarupa. The psychologists today call it psyche-soma. So, don't be caught by the sign, the Diamond Sutra makes this very clear. If the scientists continue to argue, some of them saying that the electron is just particle and others that it's only wave, it is because it is wave and particle. So we see that more and more science approaches the teachings of the Buddha. We have to transcend sign in order to touch the deep reality as it is. So a good scientist, in order to touch deeply the true reality, has to release his knowledge about the objects of his mind and release the principle of identity. To always try to give an identity to everything is not correct when you see things deeply, there is no separated identity. This identity is made by millions of other identities, in order for this identity to be real identity. So a good scientist now says that we have to erase the distinction between the observer and the observed. It's better to be a participant than to be an observer, that is the erasing of the distinction between the observer and the observed object. So instead of being an observer, we try to be a participant, and that is very close to the way we practice Buddhism. So please come to Plum Village as a participant, not as an observer.

In this winter retreat we try to practice Noble Silence from the evening after sitting meditation until after lunch. During this retreat, if you practice silence during half of the day, you will discover that a number of the sentences you speak may not be necessary. In that practice, when you feel that you want to speak, you don't speak but you take a booklet and you write it down. Then another moment later when you want to speak, you don't speak but you write it down, then the day after, you look at it and then you feel that it is so funny. It's not necessary, these sentences are not necessary at all. In us there is a kind of habit energy that pushes us to act or to speak in a way that we don't want to. We know that if we speak like that, it will destroy a lot. We know, we are quite intelligent to know that if we do like that, if we act like that, it destroys, but we still destroy, we still speak, we still act. We also know that if we do like that we will lose our friendship, we cause a lot of suffering to ourselves but we still do it. That is what we call habit energy. There's a kind of negative habit energy that pushes us to do like that.

So when you practice silence for half of the day, it is in order to observe this negative habit energy. You can write down in your booklet: "Today at half past nine I have been pushed by things, but I stopped." and "This morning that habit energy stood up and pushed me to act like that, but I have stopped." So if you practice silence for half of the day like that, you will discover a lot. If you don't practice silence until early morning after breakfast, try to practice this properly. Everyone should have a notebook in order to write down all the urges born in your mind, these urges are your habit energy. Sometimes they may be good, but most of the time they're unnecessary. So write them down and recognize them only. You recognize them, that does not mean that you transform them right away. But the fact that you recognize them is quite enough to transform them slowly. Silence is in order to help us to observe, but not for my benefit, it's for your benefit, to observe your negative energy. There are those who practice half of the day of silence and feel so happy, they want to prolong it longer.

Your whole being will express in other ways. Sometimes we feel that if we pronounce that sentence, it will show caring, but in fact without pronouncing that sentence, your look, your way of approaching, your way of helping silently shows a lot of caring, much more than some diplomatic words. The practice is helping you to observe yourself, to observe a number of habits that you can identify as "good, neutral, or not good", in order to transform ourselves. We have heard a lot about bodhisattvas and we always have the impression that a bodhisattva is someone who is very beautiful, very wonderful, very holy, and that you will never be a holy person like the bodhisattvas. In fact bodhisattvas are just people like you, who are trying to practice these points in order to live their life deeply, not in a superficial way. When you hear something, when you look at something, you try to look deeply, see deeply in order to go through the deluded sign, in order to reach the true nature of that person. If you are still angry with that person, if you are still fearful of this person, it's because you see their deluded form. When you see their true nature, then you can reach them, you can accept them and live happily with them. You can be a bodhisattva even if you are only 14 years old you don't need to wait until you become a monk or a nun and receive the big ordination in order to be a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva could be 14 years old.

You are a person who has a lot of happiness, a lot of freedom; free from your anger, free from your craving, free from your fear. And you understand via the paratantra, you can understand the most difficult people, you show a lot of care, of love, yet you are silent in order to observe your negative energy, observe, transform… then you can be a bodhisattva at the age of 14, 15, 18, 20, 50, 60. Then this community will be a pure land, because everybody will adorn the community. We adorn the community without knowing that we are adorning the community. Like in the Diamond Sutra: the bodhisattvas are those who adorn the Buddha Land, without knowing that they are adorning the Buddha Land. So you will become a bodhisattva, you adorn this Land without knowing that you are adorning this Land. You adorn it beautifully by the way you breathe, you eat, you walk, and you transform. When you go home, if you can touch the members of your family, they will become like you, and your family will become a Buddha Land without knowing that it is a Buddha Land. There are some satellites that can go very fast through the air. You also can do like this, if you are a bodhisattva. I know there are a number of you whose presence causes a lot of joy and peace for the community, they are bodhisattvas. There are also those who are present in this community who do not offer a lot, but still offer some, they are also bodhisattvas. So we have great bodhisattvas and bodhisattvas who are less great, but you all are bodhisattvas if you care to practice properly, diligently and then the speed of your practice will go very fast, like the speed of light.

Akalika is the practice that does not need time. As soon as you decide to begin practicing, you obtain freedom right away, you obtain peace right away, you obtain no craving, no anger right away. The practice of silence is in order to observe your negative energy and to transform it. In summary, a bodhisattva is not a legendary personality, bodhisattvas are you, you all. Even if you are very young. You don't need to know all of the teachings of the Buddha, you only need to listen for one hour to the teaching of Thay and if you practice right away you will become a bodhisattva right away, you don't need time to become a bodhisattva. You understand, then you love, and you will not reproach anybody, you are a living bodhisattva in this life.

[Three sounds of the bell]